

WORK SESSION-----ROANOKE CITY COUNCIL

April 29, 2002

12:15 p.m.

Pursuant to Resolution No. 35454-070201, adopted by Council on Monday, on July 2, 2001, a work session of Roanoke City Council was called to order on Monday, April 29, 2002, at 12:15 p.m., in the Emergency Operations Center Conference Room, Room 159, Noel C. Taylor Municipal Building, 215 Church Avenue, S. W., City of Roanoke, by Mayor Ralph K. Smith.

PRESENT: Council Members William D. Bestpitch, William H. Carder, Linda F. Wyatt, W. Alvin Hudson, Jr., William White, Sr., and Mayor Ralph K. Smith-----6.

ABSENT: Council Member C. Nelson Harris-----1.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Darlene L. Burcham, City Manager; William M. Hackworth, City Attorney; Jesse A. Hall, Director of Finance; and Mary F. Parker, City Clerk.

CITY ATTORNEY-COUNCIL: A communication from the City Attorney requesting that Council convene in Closed Session to consult with legal counsel on a matter of probable litigation, pursuant to Section 2.2-3711(A)(7), Code of Virginia (1950), as amended, was before the body.

Mr. Hudson moved that Council concur in the request of the City Attorney to convene in Closed Session to consult with legal counsel on a matter of probable litigation, pursuant to Section 2.2-3711(A)(7), Code of Virginia (1950), as amended. The motion was seconded by Mr. Carder and adopted by the following vote:

AYES: Council Members Bestpitch, Carder, Hudson, White, Wyatt and Mayor Smith-----6.

NAYS: None-----0.

(Council Member Harris was absent)

At 12:20 p.m., the Mayor declared the meeting in recess.

COUNCIL: With respect to the Closed Session just concluded, Mr. Bestpitch moved that each Member of City Council certify to the best of his or her knowledge that: (1) only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act; and (2) only such public business matters as were identified in any motion by which any Closed Session was convened were heard, discussed or considered by City Council. The motion was seconded by Mr. Carder and adopted by the following vote:

AYES: Council Members Bestpitch, Carder, Hudson, White, Wyatt and Mayor Smith-----6.

NAYS: None-----0.

(Council Member Harris was absent.)

REPORTS BY COUNCIL MEMBERS SERVING IN LIAISON CAPACITIES ON VARIOUS COMMITTEES:

LEGISLATION-COMMITTEES: Council Member White, Chair of the Legislative Committee, and Audit Committee, advised that the Audit Committee is in a good position to do positive things in the future; and expressed appreciation for the opportunity to serve on both Committees.

VIRGINIA'S FIRST REGIONAL INDUSTRIAL FACILITY AUTHORITY: Council Member Bestpitch, Liaison to Virginia's First Regional Industrial Facilities Authority, advised that an announcement will be made in the near future regarding the first business to locate in the commerce park in Pulaski County.

PARKS AND RECREATION-ANIMALS/INSECTS-COMMITTEES: Council Member Bestpitch, Liaison to the Mill Mountain Zoo Board of Directors, advised that one issue which continues to impact the Zoo is water pressure and since water pressure is important, the City should consider funds for an upgrade in the Capital Improvements Plan.

MAYOR'S COMMITTEE ON HIGH TECHNOLOGY: The Mayor advised that the Committee has not met in recent months; Roanoke had some setbacks from the September 11 events as did the entire country; high tech centers were not the only areas affected; and a strategy is still being sought to locate high tech companies to the Roanoke area.

Ms. Wyatt called attention to outdated and antiquated computer technology used in the school system, advising that students do not have the hardware and technology to be computer literate in the technology sector; and suggested a partnership with the technology community, the schools and the City of Roanoke.

Dr. Rita D. Bishop, Associate Superintendent for Instructional Services, Roanoke City Schools, addressed the issue of technology in the Roanoke City Public schools. There was discussion with regard to providing the schools with outdated computers from City offices and businesses in the City of Roanoke which replace their technology at a faster pace than City offices. She stated this is the first time that the school system has had funds to begin a "refreshing" project which could be as much as \$200,000.00 for one elementary school, the school system has allocated approximately \$800,000.00 to the high schools, the State would like to do on line testing for the Standards of Learning, and a considerable amount of funds are needed when one takes into consideration that there are 29 education related sites.

AIRPORT: The Mayor commented that at the last Leadership Summit meeting which was hosted by Franklin County, the localities agreed to improve air service to Roanoke Regional Airport, and he would keep Council abreast of progress.

BRIEFINGS BY THE CITY MANAGER:

GRANTS: The briefing with regard to the V-Stop Grant was deferred until the next regular meeting of Council on Monday, May 6, 2002, at 2:00 p.m.

HUMAN SERVICES COMPREHENSIVE SERVICES ACT: Rolanda A. Johnson, Assistant City Manager, introduced Vickie Price, Chief Social Work Supervisor, to present a briefing with regard to the Comprehensive Services Act.

Ms. Price advised that in 1992, the Comprehensive Services Act for at-risk youth and families was enacted by the Virginia General Assembly; the Act created an interagency system of services and funding that is child-centered, family-focused, and community-based; and the Act required consolidation of eight categorical funding streams from the Departments of Social Services, Education, Youth and Family Services, and Mental Health/Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services into a State Funds Pool which is distributed to localities on a formula basis.

She further advised that the Act is designed to provide greater flexibility in the use of funds to purchase services based on the strengths and needs of at-risk youth and their families to place authority for making program and funding decisions at the community level, which decisions are made by a community planning team consisting of representatives from the City of Roanoke Social Services, the Roanoke City Public Schools, Blue Ridge Behavioral Healthcare, Court Services Unit, and the Public Health Department, based on recommendations from the interdisciplinary Family Assessment and Planning Teams.

Ms. Price highlighted the following:

CSA Mandated Target Population

Children/Youth who are:

Placed for the purposes of receiving special education services in approved private school educational programs;

Disabled and placed by local Social Services agencies in private residential facilities; and

Receiving supportive services, as defined by Section 63.1-55.8, as a means of preventing foster care placements.

CSA Referral Process

Referral is made by any community planning team member organization; other public or private agency, a parent, or the Comprehensive Services Act Coordinator. The Coordinator assigns the referral to one of the Family Assessment and Planning Teams (FAPT) which meet weekly.

FAPT develops an Individual Family Service Plan for the client which may include services to be funded by the Comprehensive Services Act State Funds Pool. Recommendations for the Act funding of services is referred to the Community Planning Team or Roanoke Interagency Council.

The Roanoke Interagency Council, which meets twice monthly, reviews the recommendations submitted by each Family Assessment and Planning Teams and, upon concurrence, authorizes expenditures of Comprehensive Services Act funds.

CSA Funding Categories

Mandated Residential

Foster Care - children in therapeutic foster care, residential facilities or family foster care placements.

Special Education - residential placements for children with serious emotional disturbance or behaviors that prevent education in traditional school settings.

Mandated Non-Residential

Foster Care Prevention - in-home services, mentoring, and/or clinical services designed to prevent foster care placement.

Special Education (Private Day Facilities) - community-based special education programs for children with serious emotional disturbance or behavioral disturbance.

Special Education (Other Day Services) - mentoring, day treatment, and/or tutoring which allow children to remain in public schools.

Non-Mandated Residential - residential placements for children referred by organizations other than DSS or public schools.

Non-Mandated Non-Residential - mentoring, in-home services and/or clinical services designed to stabilize children within their homes.

Ms. Price cited several case studies, presented an overview of projected funding for the City of Roanoke Comprehensive Services Act, and shared data from 2001 for comparison with other localities.

In closing, Ms. Price called attention to the following new services and resources developed to address community-wide needs for Comprehensive Services Act children:

Enhanced in-home and mentoring services to prevent both foster care and private day placements.

Site-based day treatment programs at Roanoke City elementary and middle schools.

Day treatment for “Headstart” children.

Recruitment of therapeutic foster care homes.

A full-time substance abuse counselor in the Court Services Unit.

Virtual Residential Program through Family Preservation to prevent out of home placements.

Enhanced reading programs at the Achievement Center and Minnick Education Center to promote children’s return to public school.

Pilot program at Rivermont School for after-school reading and tutoring.

Council Member Wyatt requested that the matter with regard to a regional facility be placed on the agenda for discussion at an upcoming summit meetings.

Council Member Hudson expressed concern with regard to an individual who demonstrates serious emotional and sexual behaviors being returned to the community just because of age maturity; whereupon, the City Manager advised that there are limited conditions under which the City can keep children in foster care past the age of maturity.

At 2:00 p.m., Mr. White left the meeting.

PERCENT FOR ARTS PROGRAM: The City Manager submitted a communication advising that during the Financial and Planning Session held in March, 2002, an item was requested for inclusion in the Capital Improvements budget as requested by the Roanoke Arts Commission for the Percent for Arts Program; and the purpose of the briefing is to allow for further discussion and to receive direction from City Council, and to give specific direction to the Arts Commission. She further advised that the Capital Improvement budget proposed for 2002- 2003 does not include funds for the Percent for the Arts Program, nor other requests received from other agencies.

Council Member Wyatt commented that it was her understanding that one percent of the Capital budget was to be designated for the arts, and it was never intended to be site specific.

Vice-Mayor Carder pointed out that the guidelines state “....of the construction cost of a designated capital improvement project,” and the intent is clear that one percent of the Capital budget is to be set aside for the Sewage Treatment Plant, one percent for the schools, etc.; and he supports one percent of the capital budget being designated for the arts.

Council Member Bestpitch suggested that the Roanoke Arts Commission and/or the Percent for Arts Committee present a proposed plan identifying locations for art, types of art, etc., to Council because he is not in favor of giving a certain percentage of funds to the Arts Commission to spend without prior approval by Council.

Mayor Smith voiced concern with regard to the Percent for Art funds being spent on a pet project that may not be in the overall best interest of the City.

The City Manager commented that she would meet with the City Attorney to discuss document changes, and submit a report to Council for action, and thereafter, meet with the Roanoke Arts Commission to request that a plan be formulated with suggested locations for art, descriptions of art, etc., that the City may wish to obtain in the future.

Following discussion, the City Manager advised that a report would be submitted to Council for review within 30 days.

Mr. Hudson left the meeting.

OUTLOOK ROANOKE PLAN: The City Manager introduced Ray Gendros, Urban Design Associates, to respond to questions or concerns by Members of Council with regard to the Outlook Roanoke Plan.

The following items were highlighted:

Options for Library Location

Revitalization of the Park – Library be located on the high land close to Elm Avenue, thereby opening the rest of the park to both Jefferson Street and Bullitt Avenue.

Jefferson and Church – Heironimus Building: former department store has the high ceilings and large bay structure that make it ideal for a number of uses including: loft apartments, high tech offices and “accelerator” office space, retail uses, or public facilities such as a Library. Its large windows provide visual access from the street, which could create an open, accessible environment for the Library.

Bullitt Avenue Extension

The consultants recommended extending Bullitt Avenue to Williamson Road, thereby further defining the park and connecting it to the downtown network. Once the park and its relationship to streets is improved, the sites on its north and eastern edges will become prime development pads. While in the greater interest of developing a world-class park, the design of the Bullitt Avenue extension should be sensitive to the impact, which it will have upon the existing Magnolia Walk and could be sealed off to through traffic during performances or festivals.

First Street Bridge

The bridge, with its symbolic significance as a cultural link between historic Gainsboro and downtown is in great need of repair. Without through traffic, commercial development on Henry Street is not viable, and the role of the bridge in uniting diverse cultures will be diminished. Consultants recommend that the proposed elevator be constructed at the south end of the bridge to address accessibility issues, but the bridge also continue to allow vehicular traffic.

Council Member Bestpitch noted that there was previous discussion regarding other redesigns of Elmwood Park, and inquired as to how the proposed new Library at the corner of Jefferson Street and Elm Avenue facilitate or mitigate against other ideas for redesigning the Park, specifically how would it impact the rock outcropping on the hill.

It was explained that several alternatives were considered, i.e., page 32 of the Outlook Roanoke Plan describes the Library along the eastern part of the Park and designed to be south of the rock outcropping, which will locate the Library to where it originally was -- above the rock outcropping. He further advised that the rock outcropping would become an overlook point from reading terraces from the Library looking down over the City which would give a greater sense of activity in and around the Park; the main activity area would be between the outcropping and the Magnolia Walk; the design would need to be carefully worked out; it is hoped to keep the monument on the axis of Magnolia Walk; and there should be sufficient space to accommodate a Library building based on the program the Library now has.

Council Member Wyatt inquired as to whether the Library will be located somewhere other than in Elmwood Park, and how would the Park be envisioned; whereupon, the consultant advised that Urban Design Associates envisions the Park as needing something, and suggested that a facility be constructed.

Vice-Mayor Carder noted that there was opposition to the Bullitt Avenue extension, and asked for an explanation as to how to get the Park back since the idea is to open Bullitt Avenue. He called attention to the vagrant situation in the Park and asked for elaboration concerning security; whereupon, the consultant advised that Elmwood Park is especially problematic because of the tall trees along Williamson Road which blocks the view, closes off the Park, and makes the City less understandable.

With regard to the First Street Bridge, the consultant stated that it is a complicated and difficult area physically to work out; it represents the connection between the Gainsboro community and downtown, and one of the serious problems with the closing of Jefferson Street is the main street does not connect across the tracks. He further stated that the success of the Higher Education Center and the residential section adjacent to First Street is progressing; and the consultants would like to ensure that whatever happens, the design will support the Henry Street initiative and the vitality of development.

Mayor Smith noted increased activity on the north side of the tracks, and how First Street Bridge serves the Higher Education Center and the downtown area; and the historic significance of the Bridge was also noted and how it is becoming more important to citizens.

Vice-Mayor Carder expressed his appreciation for a good street grid design and also two-way traffic; he called attention to old photographs looking up Jefferson Street into the Gainsboro area, and questioned why the City could not lobby the railroad to not only have First Street Bridge open, but also to again open Jefferson Street.

Vice-Mayor Carder raised a question with regard to the recommendation concerning a two-way street; whereupon, the consultant advised that the recommendation is to extend two-way traffic all the way to Williamson Road.

OTHER BUSINESS:

BUDGET: Council Member Wyatt suggested that the Fiscal Year 2002-03 Recommended Budget list departments and unfunded positions; whereupon, the City Manager advised that there are 11 unfunded positions and a list of affected departments will be provided.

There being no further business, the Mayor declared the meeting adjourned at 2:55 p.m.

A P P R O V E D

ATTEST:

Mary F. Parker
City Clerk

Ralph K. Smith
Mayor
